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SUBJECT: GOC FACES CHALLENGES IN EXPANDING STATE PRESENCE
IN MACARENA

REF: 07 BOGOTA 8068

Summary

1. (C) The GOC's Center for Coordinated and Integrated Action (CCAI) is working to better coordinate security and civilian agency efforts to establish civilian state services in post-conflict areas, but is hampered by lack of sufficient staff and funding to fully manage its vast range of responsibilities. CCAI's flagship effort to establish permanent GOC control over the FARC's old strongholds in the Macarena region of Meta department is advancing, but local officials tell us they need more development programs, infrastructure, and private investment to consolidate the gains achieved to date. Senior GOC officials recognize the need to further improve interagency cooperation and support for CCAI, and the Defense Ministry is leading an effort to better integrate civilian agencies into the process. An Embassy working group continues to adjust U.S. programs as the GOC refines CCAI and its Macarena strategy. The GOC plans to replicate the Macarena model in other post-conflict zones. End Summary.

CCAI's Systemic Challenges

2. (U) On July 16-18, U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) hosted a conference which focused on the GOC's Center for Coordinated and Integrated Action (CCAI) and its efforts to implement the Consolidation Plan for Macarena (PCIM). The PCIM is a civil-military strategy designed to establish permanent GOC control of six counties in Meta previously held by the FARC, and requires close coordination between military and civilian agencies. The GOC plans to apply the PCIM model to other regions in Narino, Antioquia, Bolivar, Sucre, and Norte de Santander departments.

3. (U) GOC officials noted that CCAI has made major progress in improving interagency coordination, but conceded that much remains to be done. CCAI continues to lack sufficient staff and budget authority to fully manage its vast range of responsibilities, and individual ministries resist surrendering control of resources. Vice Defense Minister Sergio Jaramillo noted that coordination between the military and civilian efforts is key to PCIM's success, and urged civilian ministries to make a greater commitment to CCAI. Key issues such as transitioning responsibility for security from the military to the police, developing a viable legal

economy, and extending health and education services could not be managed only by the Defense Ministry.

Security Remains a Concern in Macarena

¶4. (U) CCAI's main focus is the Macarena region where a sustained Colombian military push has produced major security improvements, especially in urban centers. La Macarena Mayor Eliecer Vargas Moreno and Vista Hermosa Mayor Miguel Antonio Briceno Sicacha told us that for the first time in memory, urban residents could openly protest against the FARC with many participating in the July 20 national march against the terrorist group. They said security remains an issue in rural areas, but noted that even there the situation has improved. Still, Moreno added that many non-governmental organizations and aid agencies cannot work in the region due to security concerns.

¶5. (U) Moreno and local community leaders said economic development is key to consolidate the security progress achieved to date. Residents need assistance to create alternatives to coca production, including technical assistance to promote micro-agricultural business, cattle ranching, and reforestation. The region also needs roads to provide residents with access to markets. Moreno said the military and police are undertaking some small-scale development projects. The USG, through USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), has also implemented over 200 small infrastructure projects in these counties under GOC auspices since 2007.

Coordination Problems Continue for CCAI and PCIM

¶6. (U) CCAI is working to boost civilian services and development in the Macarena. With funding from the U.S. Military Group, construction began on a Fusion Center (CFI)--PCIM's civilian-military headquarters--in early September after a year-long delay. The CFI is set for completion by late October, and will provide a secure site for GOC civilian staff. The delay led to backups in staffing the Center, especially from the Prosecutor General's Office (Fiscalia). CFI staff are meant to be the on-the-ground implementers in Meta, but the Center will require more robust support from civilian agencies (legal, judicial and agricultural) if it is to respond to community demands for civilian services and development in the near term.

CCAI Outreach for PCIM Support

¶7. (C) In August and September, Armed Force Commander General Freddy Padilla, Colombian National Police Commander Oscar Naranjo, Accion Social Director Alfonso Hoyos, and Jaramillo held a series of meetings in Meta with military, civilian and local officials to try to clarify the roles of the different GOC entities in the PCIM, but did not agree on how to coordinate staffing, funding and policy needs in the region. Naranjo said the CNP is willing to augment police presence and police stations in late 2008, but needs better coordination with the military. PCIM civilian head Alvaro Balcazar said the GOC must resolve land titling issues for families who have voluntarily eradicated their coca--as well as for families who are being resettled from the Macarena National Park--if alternative development is to succeed.

¶8. (C) GOC efforts to engage the private sector also had mixed results. Private sector representatives told GOC officials they are not interested in investing for "charity" purposes to support the PCIM. Any private investment in the Macarena must be financially viable. Pajonales executive Luis Fernando Murgeitio explained that while the Macarena region has the potential to be an important agricultural zone, the national and local governments need to create the necessary conditions for investment. Indupalma executive Ruben Dario Lizarralde said that while security remains a major concern, land rights and titling must also be clarified

before investors will consider the region.

¶9. (C) Catalina Rivera of the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) said the GOC is starting a pilot program in Meta aimed at titling 3500 small farms a year over three years. It may also create special zones for displaced person returning to the region. The major obstacle is the requirement that beneficiaries will only be able to gain title to land if they have lived on it for 5 years or more, and can prove that they have not grown coca during that period. Jaramillo noted the obvious problems for the Macarena region, given its historic and pervasive coca cultivation.

GOC/USG Way Forward

¶10. (C) Military and civilian officials agree that CCAI is the mechanism that will allow the GOC to reestablish state presence in conflict and post-conflict zones. Still, more resources and support from across the GOC bureaucracy are needed for successful implementation. General Carlos Saavedra told us the military must move beyond "Plan Patriota" and coordinate with other security entities and civilian institutions. The Defense Ministry is trying to involve civilian ministries and agencies in a strategic planning process aimed at producing coordinated, flexible and integrated GOC efforts to defeat the FARC. Vice Defense Minister Juan Carlos Pinzon highlighted the need for the GOC to develop a more organized system to finance these interagency activities--especially infrastructure. The Embassy has set up a working group to coordinate adjustments in U.S. programs and strategy, as the GOC refines CCAI's staffing, budgetary authorities, and priorities.

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